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ABSTRACT

Some of the common characteristics associated with juveniles who become involved in gang activities are identified. Programs that attempt to alleviate the situations that lead to gang involvement and programs that deal with juvenile delinquents are discussed. The history of the juvenile justice system is also traced. Characteristics that can predispose a youth to gang membership include social and family background, personal problems independent of background, and school factors. Some programs that attempt to deal with these characteristics are described. Among these is the Parents and Children Together (PACT) program, which emphasizes early intervention and increased parental involvement. Once adolescents have become involved in gangs, different strategies are needed. Some approaches deal with the school environment, some focus on the community, and others work in other environments. Research on these programs does not always give enough information for those interested in replication. Most research does indicate the need for building juvenile self-esteem and communication skills. (Contains 14 references.) (SLD)

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Literature Review:

Reasons and Remedies for Gangs and Delinquency Among School Age Children

by

David L. Sloan

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Introduction

Juvenile behavior that deviates from the traditional norms of society is nothing new, and neither is the formation of groups of juveniles who engage in similar acts of deviance. Sometimes these groups are formally set up with names, rights of passage into the group, dress, identities and characteristics. Such groups are often called gangs. By nature, those members of gangs that are juveniles are of school age. Consequently, the school has the potential to become a place for gang formation and activities.

"It has often been contended that Los Angeles is the gang capital of the nation: Its Latino youth set the conduct for Latino gangs throughout the country: its Crips control narcotics markets in many cities: and its Southeast Asian gangs emulate violence similar to that of their war-torn childhood homes. Fears of Southern California residents have been fanned by reports of gang rampages in which youth, family members, and strangers were maimed or killed. Public schools figure prominently among the locations of gang violence. Not only are they the site for rival gang conflicts, but on some campuses gang members intimidate other pupils with their wanton violence and extortion, and intimidate teachers with demands for grade changes and with sexual assaults" (Schwartz, 1989).

On Friday, August 6, 1993, gang violence became quite evident at the high school were I teach, not too far from The Forum and Los Angeles International Airport. Many individuals

with many weapons became involved in altercations that greatly disrupted the school setting. It is rather difficult to conduct a class when a gang-related stick fight is going on in front of the classroom windows. The corresponding bull-horn announcements and high police presence helps to disperse those that are fighting, but add to the distractions that may hinder the education of students. If gangs had no other effect on education than such disruptions, it would still be a problem in terms of an appropriate educational environment. Unfortunately, the effects of gang involvement on the educational system go much further. One point to consider, however, is whether gangs are the cause of ineffective educational encounters for students, or whether they are the result.

In the last year, just in my classroom, I have confiscated illicit drugs, had a student attacked by approximately eleven members of a rival gang, had a student who was in a gang pull a knife on another student who was also in a gang, had individuals running from the Sheriff's Department force their way into my classroom, and have lost two students from my class because they were shot in gang related activities off campus. All of these activities did not involve entire gangs, but they did involve individuals, who happened to be gang members. Socially deviant behavior that is often associated with gang involvement has a great impact on the educational process, and can be the difference between life and death for far too many people, some of which are innocent bystanders.

Statement of Problem

In this paper I will identify some of the common characteristics associated with juveniles that become involved in gang activities. Once these traits have been identified, programs that attempt to alleviate the situations that lead to gang involvement as well as programs that deal with juvenile delinquents will be discussed.

Definitions

Adjudication - a judgement or action on a petition filed with the juvenile court by others; comparable to a guilty verdict for an adult (Champion, 1992).

Corporate Gangs - juvenile gangs that emulate organized crime; profit-motivated gangs that rely on illicit activities, such as drug trafficking, to further their profit interests (Champion, 1992).

Crime - an act prohibited by law, by one who is held accountable by that law; consists of legality, *actus reus*, *mens rea*, consensus, harm, causation, and prescribed punishment (Champion, 1992).

Delinquency - any act committed by a youth of not more than a specified age who has violated criminal laws or engages in disobedient, indecent, or immoral conduct, and is in need of treatment, rehabilitiation, or supervision; status acquired through an adjudicatory proceeding by juvenile court (Champion, 1992).

Deviance - conduct which departs from accepted codes expected by society or by a particular group (Champion, 1992).

Felony - Crime punishable by imprisonment in prison for a term of one or more years; a major crime; an index crime (Champion, 1992).

Habitual offender - (also called chronic offender) persistent offender; any youth with frequent previous adjudications as delinquent; different jurisdictions have different standards about what constitutes habitual offending; usually, three or more adjudications for serious offenses qualify offenders to be labelled as a "habitual" offender (Champion, 1992).

Illicit drugs - drugs that are not being used in a legal manner. Although there are laws regarding the age of an individual using tobacco or alcohol, they are considered licit drugs (Jones and Bell-Bolek, 1986).

Juvenile - a person who has not attained his or her eighteenth birthday; varies among states, although age 18 is the most commonly used (Champion, 1992).

Juvenile delinquency - violation of the law by a person prior to his or her eighteenth birthday; any illegal behavior committed by someone within a given age range punishable by juvenile court jurisdiction; whatever the juvenile court believes should be brought within its jurisdiction; violation of any state or local law or ordinance by anyone who has not as yet achieved the age of the majority (Champion, 1992).

Labeling Theory - theory attributed to Edwin Lemert whereby persons acquire self-definitions that are deviant or criminal: persons perceive themselves as deviant or criminal through labels applied to them by others: the more people are involved in the criminal justice system, the more they acquire self-definitions consistent with the criminal label (Champion, 1992).

Misdemeanor - crime punishable by confinement in city or county jail for a period of less than one year: a lesser offense (Champion, 1992).

Recidivism - new crime committed by an offender who has served time in prison or was placed on probation for previous offenses: tendency to repeat crimes (Champion, 1992).

Scavenger gangs - gangs formed primarily as a means of socialization and for mutual protection (Champion, 1992).

Status offense - violation of statute or ordinance by a minor, which, if committed by an adult, would not be considered either a felony or a misdemeanor: also, any acts committed by juveniles which would (1) bring them to the attention of juvenile courts and (2) not be crimes if committed by adults. Examples of status offenses include running away, truancy, curfew violations, and loitering (Champion, 1992).

History

Part of the focus of this paper is on what is done for or to juveniles after adjudication. Consequently, the historical focus of this paper will fall on the history of the juvenile

justice system that is theoretically responsible for the redirection of misguided youths who may find their way into gang activities.

Dating back to biblical times, Roman law gave parents the responsibility for guiding, directing, and redirecting their children in almost any manner that they saw fit. Children were to be disciplined by their parents for any wrong-doing they did, up until the age of 7. At this point, the children became accountable to Roman law for their actions, and were disciplined according to the same penalties as those that are for adult violators of the law, even stocks, whipping posts and branding in eighteenth-century England. While the punishments may vary, this concept has survived the centuries such that many modern jurisdictions in the United States do not hold children under the age of 7 accountable for any criminal acts they may commit (Champion, 1992).

In 1790, the Walnut Street Jail in Philadelphia opened. This was a historical moment in the treatment of juveniles for several reasons. First, prisoners were not all lumped together. More serious offenders were kept separate from the less serious offenders. Second, the women and children offenders were kept separate from the men. Finally, the Walnut Street Jail sought to become rehabilitative and to train inmates for various types of productive work (Champion, 1992).

During the early 1800's, many families moved into the major cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, New York, and Chicago in

order to find employment. Because of the fact that the parents were working incredibly long hours, many children were left unsupervised. Youths who lacked a family experience or discipline system began to congregate during their idle hours, and often committed acts of vandalism. These were the American precursors to modern day gangs, and led to the programs that were the precursors to modern day gang prevention and intervention programs. One early program was the Child-Saving Movement which provided food, shelter, education, and a social environment for the idle youths. Another program was the New York House of Refuge, which was started in 1825. Its main focus was on the redirection of status offenders. Unfortunately, however, the prison like program hardened many status offenders, and led them to become career criminals (Champion, 1992).

During the rest of the ninteenth century, many different programs were established to deal with wayward youths and the gangs that they tended to form. The states began to operate reform schools, one of the earliest of which opened in Westboro, Massachusetts in 1848. By the end of the century, however, all states had some form of reform school. The typical program at a reform school had very strict discipline with total control over the juveniles, and had compulsory work. The only problem was that there was no reform taking place in the reform schools, and juvenile delinquents were becoming, and being labelled, as habitual delinquents, or adult offenders. During the era just after the Civil War, there were many orphans. Many of these

became status offenders and ended up in reform schools, simply because they had no means of support and were labelled as vagrants (Champion, 1992).

Throughout American history, many juveniles have engaged in delinquent behavior. Similarly, there is a long history of programs that attempted to deal with this situation. Some programs attempted to educate the youth, others just called themselves a school and avoided the whole issue of education. Whatever the situation, history has shown a connection between education, or perhaps more appropriately the lack of education, and deviant behavior. Many of the behaviors that juveniles exhibited in the nineteenth century are present in the twentieth century, especially the status offenses. Some of the reform concepts from the prior century can be found today as well, but there are many new approaches that exist that attempt to deal with the behaviors of juvenile delinquents, and those delinquents that congregate to form gangs.

Major Issues

There are many different contributors that may lead a child away from the mainstream of society, and into the deviant subculture of which gangs are a part. History has shown that the lack of a strong familial unit will leave the youth with little to do, no one to provide guidance, and no one to provide discipline. As a result, youths of similar circumstances find each other and provide a sense of family for each other, one that

their biological family could not provide. We call these surrogate street families gangs.

One explanation for juvenile involvement with a gang was put forth by Cohen in 1955, and is called the *Strain* theory. This theory regards group delinquency as a social activity that fills a void in the lives of the members of that group. These individuals tends to be, or at least feel, excluded from success and positive experiences at school. They lack high grades as well as the experiences of college preparatory classes. School becomes a manifestation of their low socioeconomic status, and begins to threaten their sense of self-esteem and identity. Because the family is unable to provide any images other than this to the juvenile, the juvenile turns to outside sources. Consequently, groups of individuals with similar characteristics form "in social groups and establish alternative values that grant prestige for the heroic and often deviant activities their members perform" (Schwartz, 1989). Among Chicanos in Orange County, it has been said that "family stress, whether caused by the death of a parent, divorce, abandonment, alcoholism, or criminal activity adversely impacts on the socialization of Chicano youth. When these factors are coupled with poor economic conditions in the family, insensitive educators, and a history of bigotry against Chicanos, the transition from childhood to adulthood becomes extremely difficult. Without proper family guidance, the street gang becomes a surrogate parent for many Chicano youth" (Lopez and Mirande, 1990).

In addition to the previously mentioned contributing factors, cultural issues have an impact. In one survey of Los Angeles gangs, the members were disproportionately Latino. Additionally, significantly more Latino gang members than Latino non-gang members spoke Spanish at home and with their closest friends. From this fact, conclusions can be drawn suggesting that primarily Spanish speaking juveniles have less familiarity with the mainstream culture, and are therefore more likely to seek out individuals of similar circumstances such that they can validate their own identities. In this same survey, it was indicated that Latino gang members had lower self-esteem and academic self-confidence than their non-gang Latino counterparts. In addition, gang members spent less time on homework than non-gang members, felt they did not receive the grades that they deserved, had no on-campus adult they felt that they could trust with personal or academic problems, perceived school race relations to be poor, perceived that minorities are not treated fairly, and that the school rules are not applied consistently to all students (Schwartz, 1989).

Another report provides some further insight into the characteristics of a gang member. Boys tend to join a gang around the age of thirteen or fourteen, which is a time of rapid growth and development, and changing self-concept. A result of this may be low self-esteem which presents the need for group support. The gang provides an identity, acceptance, protection and group security, and economic advantages that result from gang

related activities. Many gangs for girls exist as well. Female gangs tend to be strongly associated with a particular male gang, and are less likely to be as involved with weapons such as guns and knives (Weisfeld and Feldman, 1982).

One theory of gangs is called the Urbanization Model, which is reportedly a predeominate viewpoint in the social sciences. Early discussion of this model lead to concepts that gangs are a phenomenon that is exclusively urban, and ubiquitious among immigrant populations. More modern discussion indicates that "gangs are urban, ethnically homogeneous, territorially based groups, which create graffiti and are violent" (Lopez and Mirande, 1990).

Controversy accompanies the urbanization model, however. Apparently gangs in Southern California forgot to read up on this model. Consequently, gangs often include members from various ethnic backgrounds, exist in the suburbs, and have less stringently defined territories as a result of the mobility of suburban lifestyles (Lopez and Mirande, 1990).

Another relationship exists between employment conditions and crime. A high unemployment rate in the labor market can create a stressful state for individuals that makes them more susceptible to criminal behavior as a means of overcoming economic difficulty. Specifically applying this concept to juveniles, male juveniles feel the need to express their masculinity. Without the ability to obtain work, a sense of demoralization and frustration may follow, making the transition

from adolescence into adulthood difficult. "These pressures are aggravated by the lack of culturally sanctioned rites of passage that exist in some societies. Work may be one outlet for these pressures, and delinquency another" (Allan and Steffensmeier, 1989).

The typical form of early juvenile delinquency is exploratory and not very productive. Juveniles are testing the limits, without a real concern for maximizing their yield. General results are pocket change, analagous to the results of a minimum wage job. If there is an ample supply of work, such "low-yield high-risk" deviant endeavors will not be as appealing a source of money as they could be in a bleak job market. Where juveniles are concerned, the availability of work and not necessarily the quality of work, has an effect on the appeal of socially deviant alternatives. In addition, if a juvenile is working, he or she will have less time to develop or participate in deviant peer subcultures, and become instead more interested in the work ethic as a means of securing money. While this theory does not hold up for young adults, it has been shown to be true for juveniles. Evidence of this has been shown by correlational studies where the availability of employment opportunities for juveniles, even of varying quality, has an impact on the rates of juvenile intake and arrest. (Allan and Steffensmeier, 1989).

The characteristics of individuals that are in danger of deviating from the mainstream of society and perhaps dropping out

of school or joining a gang can be summarized with the following traits:

Social and Family Background: low socioeconomic status, minorities, children from single-parent homes, parents with poor education, primary language other than English, and unstable home life.

Personal Problems Independent of Social and Family Background: health problems (mental and physical), substance abuse, legal problems, trauma from divorce or death in the family, pregnancy, learning disabilities, and low self-esteem.

School Factors: grade retention, course failure, truancy, suspension, disciplinary infractions, low grade point average, and feelings of alienation from school authorities (Quinn, 1991).

There are many programs with a wide range of target audiences that are available to change situations such that gang involvement is not the best alternative, as well as programs designed for people that are already in gangs and are having problems. There is an entire spectrum of programs available, some are feasible in certain conditions, others are not. Several of these programs will be discussed in the following pages.

One program has been successfully implemented at a vocational and technology school with almost 800 students. The key focus of the program is building self-esteem, communication, and critical thinking skills. All new students are required to

go through a motivational program to build self-confidence. This is a team building approach with physical and mental challenges that require students to work together to meet the challenge. This greatly enhances the atmosphere of the school as all students have had to participate in similar programs, and have had the chance to see each other in unique situations. Additionally, each student with one months perfect attendance gets a ticket for a drawing for a used car that the auto shop has rebuilt and refinished, and was donated by a local dealership. Tickets are also awarded for good grades. Other awards include free meals, discount coupons for local stores, new tires et cetera. Awards are donated by local businesses, and once the community awareness about the program was heightened, they have had no problems with award supplies. Quanitifiable information such as attendance rates shows that the program is working. Beyond that, however, the students and teachers enjoy the positive atmosphere of the school, and attribute that to this program (Musko, 1992).

Another program is the Parents And Children Together (PACT) program which stresses early intervention strategies to give students the best chance they have at success in school. This program also works to increase parental involvement in the child's education, which has already been established as having an effect on gang involvement. High divorce rates, single-parent families, and rising numbers of teenage pregnancies do not make an ideal situation for early childhood development. "Almost one-

quarter of infants and preschoolers live in poverty. Last year one in every five children was born to an unmarried mother, and half of these were born to teenagers" (Cleary and Bell, 1990). With data such as this, early intervention seems very appropriate in prevention of the longer term problem of gangs.

The PACT program teaches parents how to be their child's first teacher. This builds a stronger relationship between parent and child, as well as giving the child a solid start to the schooling process. "Learning doesn't begin when a child first comes to school; it begins before that, at home and in the community. Some experts say that by age 3, a child has acquired from two-thirds to three-quarters of all usable language, and by age 4, half of a child's intelligence has already been formed" (Cleary and Bell, 1990). The program also conducts vision and hearing testing earlier than would be done traditionally. This can rectify problems before they get to be too big, following the motto: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure," rectifying a minor situation and hopefully avoiding a dropout student who turns to gang life (Cleary and Bell, 1990).

Gang activity may surface in new areas, previously void of any gangs. Again, early intervention is crucial. One middle school experienced just such a situation, and has currently avoided a real problem with gangs. The early signs of students being in a gang, such as dress, names, hand signs, et cetera, were identified and intervention was initiated. The community was educated through a ten part series of articles in the

newspaper, and parents were educated through school newsletters. Positive incentive programs were started for consistently good behavior at school, and violence was swiftly dealt with at school. Police liaisons were brought in to help with the situation. Loitering by non-students was not tolerated, keeping the school environment free of outside influences. Perhaps most importantly, teachers, students, parents, administrators and community leaders cooperated in formulating the plan to squelch the problem in its infancy. The program, so far, has worked (Nielsen, 1992).

New Mexico has used a mediation program to help deal with the problems of juveniles. There are many different forms of the program, but they all follow these basic goals: to improve communication, problem solving and conflict resolution skills, to enhance family functioning, improve the school environment, prevent juvenile violence, and reduce tensions in the community. In the schools, a conflict resolution element has been added to the curriculum. Selected students are trained in mediation, and other students with conflicts can take the problem to the mediator to help solve the problem. One elementary school reported that the program reduced the number of fights from about 150 per month to about 10 per month.

The program can be easily adjusted to the various ages of the students involved, as well as to families. Families trained in mediation techniques learn how to discuss problems in a more rational manner, without as much tendency to yell and engage in

violence. This program is particularly effective when linked to other resources in the community that provide further support and assistance, as well as follow up programs. Family involvement in the problems of a juvenile can increase the probability of keeping a juvenile out of trouble and out of gangs. If, however, the juvenile does commit a crime, mediation can be an effective deterrant to a recurring incident. The victim and the offender meet face to face, with a mediator and discuss their feelings and the issues that are involved. They talk about how their lives have changed as a result of the other person, and discuss restitution. Because the juvenile sees the victim of his or her crime as a real person with real feelings, this program can be much more effective at deterring future crimes than the impersonalization of the crime in the courts. This program has received positive responses from all those involved (Smith, 1991).

Once gangs and gang activity has been initiated, a different set of programs are available to deal with the problems. Some schools attempt to control gangs by restricting clothing that is associated with gang activity. Approximately one third of the schools in a Los Angeles survey had an anti-gang dress code. One problem with this, however, is that it often takes the school administration a while to figure out what the latest gang symbols are, such that gang identification paraphenalia is always one step ahead of the administration. As soon as one thing is

outlawed, another is devised to take its place. In this same survey, it was noted that many schools will transfer or expel gang leaders to other schools and school districts. Again this approach treats the symptoms, without any concern for treating the disease (Schwartz, 1989).

One concern related to the school's right to regulate dress, versus the rights of the student for freedom of expression. The legislature and the courts in Illinois have devised tough legislative and judicial actions that deal with this, as well as other items. The courts found that the school is justified in attempting to keep gang influences out of the schools by regulating dress, and that this was more important than the individual's right to free-expression. Individual communities are also cracking down by making parents responsible for the criminal actions of their children, and by making these parents go to classes on parenting (Menacker, et al, 1990).

One approach that has been used by law enforcement agencies is the so called "Iron Fist" approach. This approach focuses on the identification of gang members, the suppression of gang activity, and the arrest, detention, and incarceration of gang members when violence occurs. This approach has drawn criticism as being the same approach that failed in the 1940's, and is now making "Los Angeles...a national model for failure" (Lopez and Mirande, 1990).

At the other end of this scale is the "Velvet Glove" approach. This is basically a public relations campaign to deny

the prevalence or even the existence of gangs. Any problems in the city are caused by "unorganized youth (not youth gangs) between the ages of thirteen and twenty-one" (Lopez and Mirande, 1990). These inviduals are responsible for all of the vandalism, substance abuse, graffiti, thefts and violence. Such acts are done in "random" manner by individuals, not gangs. This approach is particularly common in areas that have stadiums or amusement parks, where public image has a lot to do with the financial welfare of the city. Obviously, a failure to even acknowledge the problem will do nothing to help the situation. Ignoring the problem will not make it go away (Lopez and Mirande, 1990).

Some districts have separate schools for students who are in a gang and are having difficulty in the traditional school setting. While this program sounds appropriate, some reports indicate that the teachers who have problems in the traditional school setting are the teachers that get sent to these schools to teach. Now we have problem teachers attempting to teach problem students how to learn and take part in the traditional facets of society, which is something that both parties are inherently lacking (Lopez and Mirande, 1990).

Another approach is based on the Lifer's Juvenile Awareness Project at Rahway State Prison in New Jersey. This was the program highlighted in the film *Scared Straight*. In this program, juveniles who have been identified by the police, courts, or school personnel as "troubled," are brought into contact with life sentence prisoners at a maximum security

prison. The program consisted of an intense two-hour period of face to face contact with tough, confrontational prisoners that told detailed and blunt stories of the horrors of prison life. The juveniles were told of physical abuse, sexual attacks, and gathered a sense of what "hard time" really is. The movie boasted a 90 percent success rate for juveniles that participated in the program. A low cost program with only a 10 percent rate of recidivism seemed too good to be true, and it was. Thirty-eight states investigated or adopted a similar program. Unfortunately, the programs were not as successful as was first reported. Actually, an after-the-fact analysis was performed with some rather shocking results. Statistical analysis showed that there was no effect on the delinquent behavior of females during the following year, while males were arrested at a significantly higher rate than their control group counterparts during that same follow up period (Buckner and Chesney-Lind, 1983).

Another community oriented program for helping juvenile delinquents is called the Allegheny Academy. This particular program serves juveniles for whom other programs were not successful in altering their negative behavior. The Academy is a program that delinquents are required by the courts to go to everyday after school until about 9 p.m. After this, they are returned home for the night. Program participants must also go to the academy on weekends. Successful participation in the program for one month can earn them a free day or weekend at

home. Violation of rules, failure to go to classes, or curfew violations can result in temporary incarceration in a juvenile detention facility. Allegheny Academy teaches its participants crafts such as woodworking, carpentry, masonry, painting, electrical and structural repair, food services, vehicle repair, graphic arts, and computer skills. In addition, participants are taught about substance abuse and proper behavior at home, school, and in society. As a result of learning some work skills, students can obtain summer work to help pay restitution to their victims. In addition, Allegheny Academy costs only a fraction of a full time juvenile incarceration and detention facility (Champion, 1992).

Another program targeted at the habitual offender is called Project New Pride. "New Pride is a blend of education, counseling, employment, and cultural education directed at more serious offenders between the ages of 14 and 17" (Champion, 1992). This program places an emphasis on education, employment, and maintaining or developing a closeness with family members. Program staff help participants with employment counseling and job placement, tutoring, and vocational training. Some Project New Pride centers have opened their own bakeries, janitorial services and gardening services to help offset the costs of the program. Such a program costs the taxpayers less than one-sixth the cost of dentention in a juvenile facility, and it is considered to be successful with a recidivism rate of less than twenty percent. Additionally, most participants chose to return

to school to graduate or earn their GED, and almost three-fourths of the program graduates successfully hold full-time jobs (Champion, 1992).

Other programs to deal with juvenile offenders exist that are not community oriented. Programs such as the Regimented Inmate Discipline, About Face, the U. S. Army Correctional Activity, and the Butler Shock Incarceration Correctional Facility use the Shock Incarceration model and the Army Model to turn juvenile delinquents and gang members to a new lifestyle. These are very strict military style programs that have proven to be particularly effective for juveniles involved in the various facets of drug crimes. Participants endure a rigorous schedule that challenges the mind and the body. They learn vocational skills, receive drug rehabilitation, and develop a strong sense of self relative to the rules of the program. This program is considered a success as it has a recidivism rate below thirty percent (Champion, 1992).

Another genre of program includes the experiential or wilderness types of programs. The Hope Center Wilderness Camp teaches health, safety, eduation, and therapy in a non-punitive environment. A lot of time is spent in discussion groups, and the program reports a recidivism rate below 15 percent, indicating that it is highly successful. Other programs such as Project Outward Bound is more action oriented in a wilderness setting. The program teaches participants about the wilderness, and about themselves. They learn self-confidence and self-

assurance that will help them deal with their problems better in society. Other programs in this genre include Homeward Bound, and Vision-Quest which operate in numerous states throughout the country (Champion, 1992).

Synthesis and Analysis

Having investigated several different types of programs, many commonalities surface in their themes, while their approaches may differ greatly. There are several common characteristics that may lead a juvenile to a life of delinquency. A lack of a strong family life, and feelings of exclusion at home, school, and in society can have a devastating effect of the self-esteem of a juvenile. Linguistic exclusion from mainstream society may also play a role in this perceived isolation. Many boys turn to gangs in their early teens, which is a time of awkwardness as their bodies begin to grow and develop, and individuals begin to question their own normalcy. Combine all of these factors in a society where there are no rites of passage for a boy to become a man, and he will look for some sense of self-identity and self-validation. He may find this through a part-time job, but when those are scarce, delinquency may be the answer. Gangs can provide the juvenile with a sense of identity, belonging, acceptance, protection, as well as providing financial incentives. The juvenile gang member has a sense of empowerment, identity, and purpose in life that their family, school, and society could not provide.

School and community responses to gangs have tried to: restrict gang related clothing, make the parents responsible for their child's actions, sending the student to another school, or to a school for delinquents, increase police activity, deny the existence of gangs, scaring the juveniles away from crime, and placing the juvenile in vocational or wilderness programs that build self-esteem, respect for self and others, and provide education and skills training. There is no single approach that is 100 percent effective. Different programs meet the needs of different juveniles at different levels, and some are more successful than others. The key point is that the programs need to meet the students where they are, and to engage the student in the program such that progress can be made to become a non-deviating member of society. We can only hope that we can find the right program for each individual student before it makes the problem worse, as some programs have demonstrated an ability to do.

There are many different programs to deal with gangs that have been successfully implemented. Some deal with the school environment, some focus on the community, while still others work in an environment away from the school and the community. Some of the literature available on these various programs is in the form of a research report, some are evaluative, and others are merely project discriptions. One consistent problem with the literature is that many articles do not provide information on program success and rates of recidivism. In addition, they do

not provide information about program costs, or how to get in touch with such an organization. It seems to me that if the article's target is counselors, teachers, practitioners, administrators and parents, that the authors should include as much information about how to get the program started as possible. They provide adequate descriptions of the general program, but if one were to attempt to implement such a program, he or she would need more information. Where to go to find this information would be another struggle.

As there are so many different approaches to the problem of gangs, there are many different theories on how to solve the problem. Most of the research seems to indicate the need for building juvenile self-esteem and communication skills. In addition, they all seem to indicate the need for a support system of follow up programs, family involvement, et cetera. Most programs incorporate self-confidence skills with educational objectives to meet the needs of the program. I found no research that directly disagreed with another approach. Because the approaches are different, they are obviously not in agreement on everything, but they do not disagree. Most people involved in this field realize the need for diversity in programs as no one program is ideal for all individuals. The individual programs seem to do what they feel is best, and not attempt to discredit other programs for doing what they feel is best. All programs have a common goal of helping juveniles find their way out of the trap of gangs and delinquency.

Conclusions

One of the most important results of my research is that gangs are nothing simple and nothing new. I never understood all of the sociological, psychological and economic principles that are involved in the issue of gangs. The literature was consistent in identifying what some of the major contributing factors are that lead to gang involvement: insufficient family life at home, low self-esteem, a sense of alienation from home, school, society, a lack of language skills, inability to find work, et cetera. These are the problems that exist for gang members in the United States in 1993, just as they were the types of problems that existed for gang members in the United States in 1865.

A large portion of the research talks about programs available for juvenile delinquents and gang members. It is pretty unlikely that I could send all of my students who are gang members to such a program. However, now I have a greater understanding of the sociological function of gangs for these students, and have a greater appreciation for what they are likely to be missing in life. No, I can't take them out to the wilderness, but I can do things to help build their self-esteem. I can make them feel less alienated from the school environment. I can help them with their critical thinking skills and improve their abilities to communicate effectively. I can coordinate efforts with the career center on campus to help them find part-time work. I can do my best to get the parents involved in the

schooling process, and consequently in the student's lives. I can teach them about their bodies and the changes that they are going through, such that they do not feel so ackward and abnormal. I can teach them that everyone is unique and a little bit different from each other, such that continual comparisons of their bodies to those of their classmates or models or movie stars doesn't help them. Hopefully I can create a better understanding of themselves as a unique individual, not an anomoly of nature that needs to huddle into a group to feel a sense of security. If these things could be accomplished by all of us as teachers and members of society, perhaps we could keep some of these individuals from throwing away their own identity to take on that of a gang.

Recommendations

My recommendations to educators were discussed in the previous section. My recommendations to researchers are to provide educators with more thorough and accurate research. Give us the costs of the programs, the statistical success of the programs, and who we can contact to get the programs implemented in our districts. These articles provided great insight into the nature of the problem and what is being done about it, but they should be complete in providing us with this additional information.

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